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TS-186037

30 June 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of National Estimates

SUBJECT : Trends in ICBM Deployment

1. This is in response to your question at this morning's Board and Staff meeting regarding the need for a Memo to Holders of NIE 11-8-66. The document which was the basis for your query was the ORR paper titled "New Trend in Soviet ICBM Deployment Programs."
2. The facts as we now see them are that the construction time required to bring SS-11 and SS-9 launch groups to operational status has been shorter than we estimated in NIE 11-8-66. The effect of this is to bring the total number of ICBM launchers operational in mid-1968 to about 900 which is about 17 percent more than the high side (765) of the spread estimated for that date in NIE 11-8-66. Countering this change is the evidence indicating that during the last half of 1966 and continuing to the present, construction starts of SS-11 silos have been cut back by more than 50 percent from the high rate attained in the first half of 1966. In light of this, there is general agreement in the community that the latest phase of the SS-11 deployment program may be coming to an end. If this sharp reduction in construction starts signifies the end of the SS-11 deployment program, the total number of ICBM launchers operational in mid-1969 would still be projected at about 900 or, in other words, almost right in the middle of the 805-1010 range which we projected for mid-1969 in NIPP-67. If, however, the deployment of SS-11s continues at the present low rate, the number of ICBM launchers operational in mid-1969 would be near the high side of the NIPP-67 range.
3. I would like to point out that in the 11-8 series, the projections of ICBM strengths have always reflected a smooth deployment curve based on evidence in hand. The actual Soviet deployment programs have been characterized by starts and stops resulting in a very erratic curve. We are unable to forecast where or when these aberrations will occur. Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that, in my view, when the Soviet ICBM force reaches near parity with that of the US, the precise number of launchers is of secondary importance to the questions of quality and capability of the force. NIE 11-8-67 will address itself to this matter.

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4. In sum, it is my view that NIE 11-8-66 was a good estimate which erred as to the precise time when 900 ICHM launchers would become operational but which was correct in estimating that the SS-11 deployment program would probably have been completed by 1969-1970. For these reasons, and considering that NIE 11-8-67 is due out in about three months, I strongly recommend that a Memo to Holders of NIE 11-8-66 not be issued at this time.



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